

Army Well-Being



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Army Well-Being

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On The Cover



Sgt. Ashley Hort, of the 127th Military Police Co., keeps her weapon at the ready as she provides security for her fellow Soldiers during a raid in Al Haswah, Iraq.

Spc. Olanrewaju Akinwunmi

Pay and Compensation

Policy change boosts G.I. Bill eligibility for some Guard, reserve

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

A recent DoD policy change widens the eligibility window for some reserve-component troops who want to use their Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits, a senior DoD official said recently.

The policy now aligns with Department of Veterans Affairs rules, which say National Guard members and reservists are eligible to receive Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits for the period covering the amount of time they served on active duty, plus four months, said Tom Bush, principal director for manpower and personnel within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

After studying the matter over the past few months, DoD agreed to align its policy with the VA's, Bush said. DoD's previous policy only recognized the amount of active-duty time as applied to the G.I. Bill coverage period for reserve-component members but still required the member to continue to serve in the Selected Reserve.

"The change, from the DoD perspective, is that the benefit now can be used by somebody who leaves the Selected Reserve for the amount of time that they've served on active duty, plus four months," Bush said. Guard and reserve members who attend regular drill training and meetings are considered part of the Selected Reserve.

The total amount of G.I. Bill coverage for

reservists is still 36 months, Bush said. "So, if you've used part of that [G.I. Bill benefit] it may eat into that 36 months."

Bush said reservists normally have 14 years to use their Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits. However, that time might also be extended by the amount of time Guard or reserve members serve on active duty, plus four months.

Senior Guard and reserve officials, as well as demobilization sites, have been alerted to the policy change, Bush said.

About 370,000 Guard and reserve members on drill or active-duty status have signed up to use Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, Bush said.

The Reserve Education Assistance Program, established by the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act, is another DoD education initiative for members of the Guard and reserve, Bush said. To be eligible, servicemembers must have served at least 90 consecutive days of active service after Sept. 11, 2001, in response to a Presidential or Congressional call-up of military forces for wartime or other emergency service.

Guard and reserve members who served for two continuous years on active duty in support of a contingency operation would qualify for both the Montgomery G.I. Bill and REAP and could select which program they want to use, Bush said.

Servicemembers can determine if they qualify for the Montgomery G.I. Bill and REAP by contacting their local education office.

Rules change for free, reduced-price school lunches overseas

DoD Education Activity

Defense Department Education Activity officials are encouraging families of children attending its overseas schools to reapply for free and reduced price school lunches.

Earlier this year, DoDEA requested an increase in the reimbursement rate the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides for school lunches. The USDA approved the request and also authorized the use of the Alaska Income Eligibility Guidelines in qualifying families to participate in the program.

As a result, more families may qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, DoDEA officials said.

This change applies to families of children attending DoDEA schools overseas in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Azores, Turkey, Korea, Japan, and Okinawa. It does not include families of children attending DoDEA schools in Puerto Rico or Guam, who fall under their state Department of Education programs.

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service, the Navy Exchange Service Command and Marine Corps Community Services are designated school food authorities for the Department of Defense Dependents Schools overseas.

See Free lunches on Page 3

Compensation program for frequent deployments unveiled

By Sgt. Sara Wood

American Forces Press Service

The Defense Department recently unveiled a program that will reward administrative leave to servicemembers whose service in combat does not meet the department's goal for the time at home-station between deployments.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates directed the development of this program Jan. 19, when he implemented a force-management policy stating that DoD's goal was to give active-duty troops two years at home-station for every year deployed, and reserve-component troops five years at home-station for every year deployed. At the time, Defense Secretary Gates recognized that national security concerns would require servicemembers to be deployed more frequently than this goal, so he announced a compensation plan to make up for frequent deployments.

Under the new policy, active-duty servicemembers who are deployed for more than 12 months in a 36-month period will earn one day of administrative absence for each month beyond 12. If servicemembers are deployed for more than 18 months in a 36-month period, they will earn two days of administrative absence a month. Past 24 months, they will earn four days a month.

Members of the reserve components will earn one day of administrative absence a month for every month beyond 12 they are mobilized in a 72-month period. Members of the reserve components will also earn two



Air Force Master Sgt. Andy Dunaway

Soldiers from the 2nd Infantry Division's 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team provide security during a joint foot patrol lead by the Iraqi army Soldiers on the streets of Baghdad April 10. DoD announced recently that it will compensate Soldiers whose service in combat exceeds DoD's goal for the time at home-station between deployments with administrative leave.

days a month if they are mobilized past 18 months in a 72-month period, and four days a month if they are mobilized past 24 months in the same period.

Administrative absences are days off authorized by the commander, and are separate from normal leave accrued by a servicemember.

In a Pentagon news conference announcing the policy, Michael Dominguez, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said that this program is meant to recognize the sacrifices servicemembers make, but is in no way trying to put a physical value on their service.

"Secretary Gates and all of us honor the service of the men and women in uniform, particularly in these demanding times," Dominguez said. "This program can't be viewed as being commensurate with the level of service that they offer to the nation. In many respects, while it is substantive and it is tangible, it's also symbolic. It's part of our recognition that we're keeping them in our thoughts and we're trying to do something for them."

The policy is retroactive to Jan. 19, so any servicemember who was deployed or involuntarily mobilized from that day forward, whose service exceeds the time frame in the policy, will earn the days off, Dominguez said. Also, troops who were deployed within the last three years, and are deployed now, will earn administrative leave for their current deployment.

In deciding what compensation to give ser-

vicemembers who are deployed more frequently than DoD would like, defense officials considered a wide range of options, Dominguez. Monetary compensation was considered, but time off seemed the logical choice to reward increased frequency and intensity of service.

"We weren't trying to find some metaphysical balance between the service you were rendering and buckets full of gold, or any other thing we can do for you," Dominguez said. "This was about telling men and women of the armed forces that we know when we ask you to do something extraordinary."

DoD has had a policy since 2004 that pays servicemembers who are extended in theater beyond 12 months \$1,000 a month, Dominguez said. That policy is still in effect, he said, and applies to Army personnel who now have to serve 15-month tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The new policy is meant to deal with frequency of deployments, rather than the length of each deployment, Dominguez said. The administrative leave servicemembers earn under this policy will stay with them through their military career and can be used anytime, with commander approval.

"This is what we do; it is the job," he said. "This is the job of the men and women of the armed forces, from which they do not shirk, and the volunteer force is extraordinary. This is just saying, 'look, we know what you're doing, we recognize what you're doing, we're proud of what you're doing, we're grateful for what you're doing.'"

Free lunches

From Page 2

AAFES is the largest school food authority, providing USDA-approved school meals to students on Army and Air Force installations in nine countries throughout Europe and the Pacific.

The school lunch program is designed to meet federal requirements for nutritionally balanced meals and to offer free or reduced price meals to eligible children.

Installation commanders operate and maintain the program by providing instructions on how to apply for the program, determining eligibility of applicants and maintaining and updating a list of students enrolled in the program.

Training, technology combine to save lives in Iraq

By Tim Kilbride

American Forces Press Service

Expanded training in combat life-saving procedures has enabled a greater than 98-percent survival rate for U.S. troops injured in Iraq, a coalition surgeon said in late April.

These skills, combined with improved communications technology and a robust air-evacuation support network, mean Soldiers are surviving traumatic injuries at an unprecedented rate, Lt. Col. Jason Wiemann said.

Speaking from Iraq, the Multinational Division Baghdad surgeon said major advances over past conflicts have been made in the speed of care for the wounded.

"It's often 30 minutes from time of injury until the patient's in an operating room being treated by a surgeon," Wiemann said. However, treatment in the first 30 minutes is "all up to his buddies in the field and the training that they've had."

The most recent iteration of that training, known as the Improved Combat Life Savers Course, was unveiled in October 2005 to teach emergency "skills to non-medical Soldiers based on the injury patterns that we've been seeing during this conflict," Wiemann said.

"We've added several fairly advanced medical procedures to the repertoire of the non-medical Soldier," he noted. They involve "decision-making skills for treating casualties when they're under fire, when they're not under fire and during the evacuation process."

Army personnel identified three main types of injuries afflicting U.S. troops in Iraq and shaped the training around those, Wiemann explained. The injuries include massive bleeding from extremity wounds, trauma to the chest cavity in which air pockets develop and obstruction of airways.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall

Sgt. Michael Daugherty, a medic from the 1st Cavalry Division, lifts a wounded Iraqi police officer into an ambulance at Forward Operating Base Normandy in March. Very few Iraqi casualties end up in American facilities now that the Iraqi military medical system has been brought up to speed with significant improvements.

To treat such injuries, Wiemann said, Soldiers are trained in the use of pressure bandages, tourniquets, nasal airway tubes, needles, litters and hemostatic dressings designed to create "an almost instantaneous clot" on areas of arterial bleeding. Hemorrhagic bleeding, in particular has previously been "very difficult to manage in the field."

Despite the importance of rapid, superficial treatment at the time of injury, getting wounded troops to medical treatment facilities remains vital to their survival, Wiemann said.

"When we've taken all these skills and we've coupled them with the fact that the air-mobile evacuation assets within theater

have never been paralleled in the history of warfare," the surgeon said, "we can generally have a helicopter to the site in less than 15 to 20 minutes, and often have a patient to an advanced surgeon within 30 minutes to an hour after an injury."

Soldiers are now surviving wounds that in the past they "would've been lucky to survive if they happened right next to a major trauma center," he said. "A lot of these are due to the combat life savers."

Meanwhile, Wiemann said, U.S. forces are also engaged in training the Iraqi army in basic combat lifesaving.

The goal is "to make as many of the Iraqi army familiar with

basic first aid as possible," he explained, "and eventually ... get into the same level of training as we do with the American Army."

Extensive work has been done to bring the Iraqi military medical system up to speed and build medical competency within the Iraqi force, he said.

"Very few of the Iraqi casualties end up in [American] facilities now," Wiemann said.

At the same time, the surgeon said U.S. reconstruction efforts have focused on water and sanitation projects meant to improve Iraq's deteriorated, and in some places nonexistent public-health infrastructure.

"That's a big part of what our goals are," Wiemann said, "repairing the infrastructure of the country to include sanitation grids, water supplies, garbage pickup. There's entire programs based around improving the sanitation of Baghdad."

Progress toward those goals has been impeded in part by the security situation, Wiemann said.

"It seems to be a common practice with the insurgents that they like to attack such things because it does create such an impact, but headway is being made constantly in those areas," he said.

And despite injuries, setbacks and even mental-health issues, Wiemann said, the majority of U.S. troops remain positive on their mission in Iraq.

"The good that's going on here is evident to everyone here," Wiemann said. "It doesn't get played up as much as it potentially could, but everybody has wonderful stories ... of schools being rebuilt, hospitals being rebuilt, children running up on the street playing with the Soldiers."

"Most Soldiers are in the Army because they wanted to be Soldiers," he said. "We pre-select ourselves for the fact that this was our calling in life, that we're here to serve the country."

Soldiers break from combat at Freedom Rest

By **Spc. L.B. Edgar**
Army News Service

BAGHDAD, IRAQ – Rest and relaxation is a luxury to Soldiers on the battlefield, where the fears of being hit by IEDs or losing a buddy in combat haunt Soldiers daily. The recent extension of tours to 15 months makes active-duty Soldiers need a break that much more.

Freedom Rest, an oasis in the center of the Iraqi capital, helps Soldiers escape the stress of life on the front lines of war. There, they can strip away their body armor, lock up their weapons and enjoy time off without leaving the theater of operations.

Located in the International Zone, Freedom Rest is staffed by Morale, Welfare and Recreation staff. MWR specialists schedule such events as basketball, flag football, poker, dodge ball, karaoke and tug of war.

A 24-hour Internet café lets Soldiers talk and write to Family and friends for free. Personal physical fitness trainers are on site, and a combat stress team and chaplain are available for counseling. Such typical services as a Post Exchange and barber shop are also available.

“We’re here to make sure you have a good time. We want you to relax,” said Mr. Craig Miller, a certified personal trainer at Freedom Rest.

“You just get stressed out sometimes. You feel like you’re a grenade and your pin is going to pop sometimes,” said Spc. Kupiec, who was deployed in October and recently took a break at the facility. “A lot of guys deal with the stress differently.”

Kupiec, who’s assigned to the 25th Infantry Division’s Troop D, 1st Battalion, 40th Cavalry Squadron, 4th Brigade Combat Team, has dealt with death both near and afar. A friend back home tried to commit suicide two weeks before his stay at Freedom Rest, and ten days before, a medic in his unit died during combat operations.

“I think that is why they [command] sent me out here, to kind of let me not think about it and relax,” the 22-year-old said.

The all-wheel mechanic said he sees the value of a break from the action now and then. Many of the Soldiers in his company are teenagers straight out of high school who have never lived on their own, let alone deployed to a war zone, he said.

The Freedom Rest facility originally served Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard as an officers’ club. The villas Soldiers occupy today housed Iraqi officers prior to 2003. After



Spc. L.B. Edgar

The view from the high-dive platform shows the layout of Freedom Rest, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation resort in the heart of Baghdad. Despite the surge of troops into the Iraqi capital, there are room availabilities for Soldiers seeking a brief respite from day-to-day operations.

the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the 1st Armored Division opened the facility to Multinational Division - Baghdad Soldiers in October 2003.

Since then, Freedom Rest has hosted more than 35,000 Soldiers, said Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Sanders, the facility’s noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

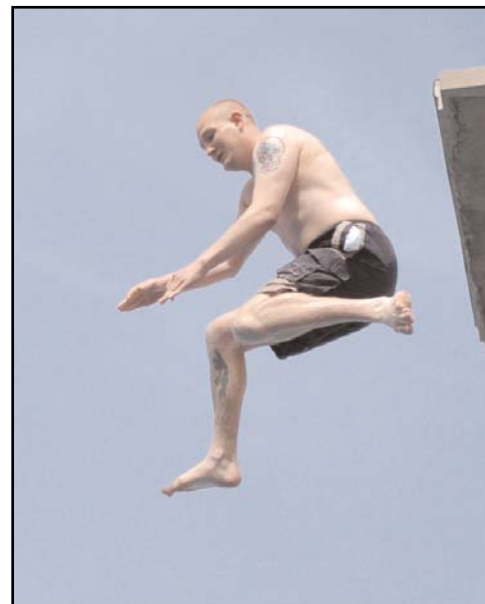
“We really try to take care of the Soldier and we have nothing but good times scheduled for the Soldier,” Sanders said. “When it comes time for them to leave, they don’t want to leave, and all they say is that I hope to get another chance to come back to Freedom Rest.”

More than just a resort where Soldiers can enjoy themselves, Freedom Rest is also a tool for commanders, according to Sanders.

“I want leadership to know about Freedom Rest and be able to send their Soldiers here. Even though they say they’re not able to lose a Soldier for four days, this is a prime opportunity for Soldiers to be totally refreshed,” Sanders said. “It’s the only R&R facility within the Iraqi theater, so it allows the leadership to send their Soldiers for four days instead of losing them for nine if they go to Qatar.”

Reservations are available despite the ongoing surge of troops into Baghdad, Sanders said. The facility also hosts conferences and meetings.

Editor’s note: *Edgar is with the 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.*



Spc. L.B. Edgar

Spc. Dan Medoff, 23, a combat medic with 28th Combat Support Hospital, 44th Medical Command, leaps from the 30-foot high-dive into the pool during the Big Splash competition at Freedom Rest April 10. Freedom Rest is a program for servicemembers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which gives participants the opportunity to enjoy four days of rest and relaxation.

Enlisted spouses share issues with Army's senior spouse

By Nichole Riley
Army News Service

FORT JACKSON, S.C. – The Army's senior spouse met with some of Fort Jackson's enlisted spouses during a forum recently at the Post Conference Room.

Sheila Casey has been a military wife for 37 years and is a mother of two and grandmother of five. She works full time as the chief financial officer for *The Hill*, a newspaper that reports on Congress.

"I am learning how to balance this, traveling and working full time," Casey said.

Currently, she is touring military installations across the world with her husband, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who is the Army's top-uniformed officer, to meet with as many Family members as she can because she wants to know what's going on in the Army community.

"We are living in very busy and very turbulent times with no obvious let-up in the near future," Casey said. "One of the biggest myths is that spouses in the military are used to this."



Nichole Riley

Sheila Casey, wife of Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr., meets with some of Fort Jackson's enlisted spouses at the Post Conference Room recently to discuss Army Family issues.

She is an advocate for Army Families and wants to get a feel for the morale of the Families

across the Army. Once she finishes hearing about the installations from the people who live and

work on them and use the Army programs, she intends to press Congress for money to meet the needs of the Army.

There are two key subjects that she is concerned with about the Army Family life.

First, she said it seems Family members don't necessarily want more Army programs; they want standardization of Army programs.

"They want to be able to go from post to post and get the same level of service at each one," Casey said.

The second subject is about teen programs – she said she feels the teenage groups are forgotten in the spectrum of Army life, and that she would like to see more opportunities and programs arise for them.

"This is an opportunity for me to listen to all the Army's Family members' needs and take them back to Washington," Casey said. She said she is planning on playing a key role in shaping the future of Army Family life.

Editor's note: Riley is the assistant editor for the Fort Jackson Leader newspaper.

Independent agency ranks military childcare centers No. 1 in U.S.

By Margaret McKenzie
Army News Service

Childcare centers run by the Defense Department were named number one in the United States for best standards and oversight March 1 by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

"We are pleased that this independent review of our child-care standards and oversight practices lead the nation," said Leslye A. Arsht, deputy under secretary of defense for the Military Community and Family Policy. "The report findings reflect a great deal of hard work and commitment to excellence within the Department of Defense."

The military childcare system offers full-day, part-day, and hourly child care; part-day preschools; before- and after-school programs for school-age children; and care in Family childcare homes.

More than 200 thousand children from 4 weeks of age to 13 years are cared for in more than 300 locations at worldwide installations each day.

The NACCRRRA reviewed state child-care center policies and regulations for 50 states, the District of Columbia and DoD. The DoD childcare system stood alone, Arsht said, ranking number one on top-10 lists for best standards and best oversight practices. No state appears on both lists.

"This study is yet another affirmation the Military Childcare Program is a 'model for the nation,' and continues to meet the congressional intent that 'military child care be on the leading edge of child care in America,'" said M.A. Lucas, director of Child and Youth Services at the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command in Alexandria, Va.

DoD achieves high standards of childcare through adequate funding, strict oversight,

continuous staff development, strong Family involvement and a shared commitment to excellence, she added.

"It's not just about having standards. Having standards is the easy part," Lucas said. "The fact that garrisons implement and enforce these child-care standards consistently and predictably day after day, year after year, at each of our child-development centers is the difficult part. We know that the Army is successful in this because 97 percent of our CDCs are nationally accredited by an external professional organization, and these basic standards cited in the NACCRRRA survey provide much of the framework needed for national accreditation."

Editor's note: McKenzie writes for the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command.

Army's 36th Chief of Staff shares vision, gets feedback

By Chris Rasmussen

Army News Service

FORT JACKSON, S.C. – The Army's top-ranking officer paid a visit here recently, touring the installation a week after taking over the Army's top uniformed position.

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who replaced Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker April 10 as the 36th Chief of Staff of the Army, said the visit was a chance to share initiatives he will implement and receive feedback on the challenges the Army faces in the future.

"What I am doing now with these visits is trying to calibrate whether these are the right initiatives and whether we have the emphasis in the right places," he said. "These initiatives are largely driven from the field."

His initiatives include accelerating the growth and size of the Army; increasing the quality of support to Soldiers, civilians and their Families; maintaining the momentum of modernizing the Army; and completing the transition of reserve components.

Gen. Casey's visit to Fort Jackson began at the 120th Adjutant General Battalion (Reception) where he received a briefing and toured the facilities. Next, he went to Company E, 187th Ordnance Battalion, to observe the 09L Interpreter/Translator Course, which trains Arabic-speaking people to act as



Chris Rasmussen

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army chief of staff, talks with Pvt. Scott Yunik and Spc. Matthew Swann, both with Co. E, 3rd Bn., 13th Inf. Rgt., during a visit to Omaha Range at Fort Jackson, S.C.

interpreters and translators in support of the war on terror.

"I must say I was moved by the dedication and the commitment of these men and women whose country of birth is not the United States, but are seeking to be citizens," Casey said. "Their desire to support our country is phenomenal."

Next, Casey went to two of the installation's training areas where he observed Basic Combat Training Soldiers at Omaha Beach and Drill Sergeant School candidates training at Anzio Range.

Casey's presence was a surprise to some of the Army's newest Soldiers.

"I can't believe I just met the chief of staff of the Army," said Pvt. Scott Yunik, Co. E, 3rd Battalion, 13th Infantry Regiment. "I feel so proud. We were told there would be a general out here today, but we didn't know who."

Casey, who is currently touring U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command installations, visited Georgia's Fort Benning and Fort Gordon before stopping here.

"This is General Casey's opportunity to go out firsthand and get feedback from the force and convey ideas which his transition team has identified as challenges," said Lt. Col. Gary Kolb, public affairs advisor for the Chief of Staff. "We are on a pretty heavy schedule for the next few months."

Before leaving Fort Jackson, Casey met with the installation's senior leaders to discuss his initiatives.

After visiting TRADOC installations, Casey will next visit Fort Bragg, N.C., to continue to share his initiatives with Soldiers and to capture feedback from across the Army.

Editor's note: Rasmussen writes for the Fort Jackson Leader newspaper.

Army Arts and Crafts Contest open to MWR patrons

By Margaret McKenzie

Army News Service

The Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command's Arts and Crafts program is calling for entries for the 2007 Army Arts and Crafts Contest.

Installation-level entries are due May 25. Local deadlines may be earlier.

The Army Arts and Crafts Contest is an annual, juried competition of two- and three-dimensional artwork with separate categories for novice and accomplished artists and craftspeople. Their work is entered in categories for ceramics, drawings, fibers and textiles, glass, metals and jewelry, oil-base painting, water-base painting, wood, and

mixed media, both two- and three-dimensional.

The accomplished division is for competitors who have gained skills and knowledge through formal courses leading to credit in college or art schools. Those whose skills have not been acquired in formal education leading to college credit or a degree can compete in the novice division.

First-, second- and third-place winners will be awarded cash prizes. Two honorable mentions will also be awarded for each category and group.

Photographed artwork must be clear and in focus because judges will evaluate the photos, not the actual artwork. Three-dimensional works should have at least

three views to show front and back, with details describing the craftsmanship involved in creating the piece.

Authorized MWR patrons, with the exception of employees of the Army Arts and Crafts program, are eligible to enter. All submissions must be the entrant's original work and must be completed within 24 months of the beginning of the contest year.

Work submitted in previous contest years may not be resubmitted. Each eligible patron may enter up to five works per category at the installation level at arts and crafts facilities or the recreation office at installations with no arts and crafts facility. Installations will select up to five works per category through local con-



Photo Illustration by Karen Reed

tests or selection panels to forward to the Department of the Army level of the contest.

For more information, contact your local arts and crafts recreation facility or e-mail art@fmwrc.army.mil.

Editor's note: McKenzie writes for the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command.

DoD clarifies Reserve-Component Mobilization Policy

By **Jim Garamone**

American Forces Press Service

National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers will mobilize and deploy for only one year, despite a new policy that active Soldiers will deploy for 15-month tours, a top defense official stressed in mid April.

Thomas F. Hall, assistant defense secretary for reserve affairs, reaffirmed that reserve-component Soldiers are not affected by the 15-month tour policy that Defense Secretary Mr. Robert M. Gates announced April 11.

Four National Guard brigades have been alerted for possible mobilization for duty in Iraq beginning in December 2007. If needed, those brigades will mobilize, deploy and redeploy within one year.

"We have been experiencing 18- to 21-month mobilizations for our Guard and Reserves," Hall said. "Families and employers told me that they simply could not sustain that."

On Jan. 19, soon after taking office, Gates mandated reserve components would mobilize for one year and then have five years before another mobilization.

A second portion of Gates' decision was that reserve-component units would train and deploy as units. Hall said the "cross-leveling" that cobbled together units would end.

Finally, Gates said that a compensation package would be developed if units broke their dwell time at home – in other words, were mobilized before the five-year home-station period was finished. Hall said such a package is in development, and the details



Staff Sgt. Isaac A. Graham

Spc. Marcelino Villarreal, from the Puerto Rico National Guard, provides security for fellow Soldiers in Khowst Province, Afghanistan.

may be released soon.

About 13,000 Guardsmen from the four units – the 37th Brigade Combat Team, from Ohio; the 76th BCT, from Indiana; the 45th BCT, from Oklahoma; and the 39th BCT, from Arkansas – will mobilize under the new rules. While all these units have been in U.S.

Central Command before, for fully two-thirds of the Guardsmen, this will be their first deployment.

Under the program, nine to 10 months before a potential mobilization, DoD officials will alert the Guardsmen.

"We're going to get you that time for training; we're going to get you the equipment ahead of time," Hall said. The 45th Brigade Combat Team, for example, has already scheduled a 28-day training period instead of its normal two-week rotation.

This will also help reduce stress on the force. There are 75,771 Reservists deployed worldwide to support the war on terrorism, Hall said. This is 120,000 fewer than in 2005. "We have reduced the number of Guardsmen and reservists on active duty the equivalent of six Army divisions. Now we want to make this more predictable."

All of these changes are aimed at preserving the all-volunteer force, Hall said. The force is working magnificently. Recruiting standards remain high. Through March, over-all reserve components are at 101 percent of their recruiting goals. The Army Reserve is down from its goals, he said, but Hall said he expects those numbers to climb in the coming months. The National Guard is at more than 106 percent of its recruiting goal.

"But, most important in my view is retention," the secretary said. "It is almost at all-time highs. It's the best it's been since 1991. You just don't stay with an organization or company that you don't like."

"So, we must be doing something right," he added, "because [servicemembers] are staying at near record numbers."

Combat patches now authorized at lower echelon units

By **J.D. Leipold**

Army News Service

The Army has changed its policy on the wear of combat patches as a result of the way Soldiers and their units now deploy.

Since 1945 the intent behind the wear of the combat patch, known as the "shoulder sleeve insignia-former wartime service," was to recognize Soldiers' participation in combat operations. However, this only applied to Soldiers who were serving with

such large echelon deployed units as separate brigades, divisions, corps, Army commands or higher.

"Soldiers deploy differently now, at smaller echelon levels such as companies, battalions, combat brigade teams and as individual augmentees in support of larger echelon units," said Sgt. Maj. Katrina Easley, branch chief for uniform policy at Army G-1. "At those levels they weren't authorized to wear their unit patch as a combat patch."

Once Soldiers report to their first units, they wear their com-

mand's patch on their left sleeves. When deployed to a designated combat zone, Soldiers may also wear the company-level or higher patch that they serve with on their right sleeves.

In the past, confusion resulted over which combat patch should be worn by Soldiers who were cross-leveled, assigned, attached or serving as augmentees to deployed units. This also affected Soldiers under temporary duty orders in a combat zone.

The new guidance states that when echelons below company

level deploy, Soldiers in those units may now wear the combat patch of the lowest-echelon command they deploy with, as long as it's at company level or higher.

The new implementing instructions to Army Regulation 670-1 became effective March 28 and are not retroactive.

As before, Soldiers who have earned multiple combat patches may choose which patch to wear. Soldiers may also elect not to wear a combat patch.

Military leaders must keep faith with troops

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Troops continue to trust senior military leaders, but they will lose that trust if the military does not keep its promises, Command Sgt. Maj. William J. Gainey said here in late April.

“They trust us, and we just cannot let them down,” said Gainey, the senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

While the chairman, Gen. Peter Pace, participated in meetings with U.S. and Iraqi leaders in Iraq, he asked Gainey to meet and speak with servicemembers across Baghdad.

Gainey specifically wanted to assess what effect the new 15-month deployment policy is having on Soldiers. Under the policy, active-duty Army units will deploy to the U.S. Central Command area of operations for 15 months. The units will then be guaranteed 12 months at home station before deploying again. The policy does not affect reserve component Soldiers or the other services.

Gainey said it is a good policy because it allows the Army to plus-up and maintain 20 brigade combat teams in Iraq through the summer. It also gives units deploying to Iraq the ability to complete their training. “Had they not done this, we’d have had five brigades deploying before they finished training.”

The command sergeant major visited Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division, which includes some Soldiers on their third rotation to Iraq. “I walked around and spoke to Soldiers where they worked,” Gainey said. “They are concerned, but they are willing to Soldier on because they are Soldiers.”

Some of the Soldiers, he said, are worried that the emphasis on units in the deployment will make the Army lose sight of the individual. “They want the Army to consider ‘boots on the ground’ time, not units on the ground time.” Some Soldiers come into country in the advance party for units or stay longer. The feeling is that they should receive credit for all the time they spent on the ground.

The next day, Gainey visited Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Callahan in the middle of Baghdad. It is a new FOB and the 82nd Airborne Division unit there had to secure the area, defend and fortify it, and begin patrolling. The FOB is in an old burned-out shopping mall in the middle of the city. “It’s like a seven-story Alamo.”

The Soldiers battle heat, lousy living conditions, isolation and pigeons. “The birds have



Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander

Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division provide security during a cordon and search operation in Al Adhamiya, Iraq. Command Sgt. Maj. Gainey said all the Soldiers he met on his visit to Iraq were motivated and ready to do their missions.

nested inside the building and they are everywhere,” he said. “And then you still have to deal with the enemy.”

The Soldiers in the FOB have been hit a few times by rocket-propelled grenades and the like, but nothing that has yet penetrated the defenses. “But the troopers go out on constant mounted and dismounted patrols,” Gainey said. “They see they are making a difference in that area of Baghdad, and they are proud of what they do, and what they have overcome.”

Gainey said the place reminds him of an earlier deployment, when his unit lived in a tractor factory in Bosnia. “It’s the pits, but they are making the best of it.”

Finally, the sergeant major traveled to FOB Warhorse. The Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division there told Gainey that they were concerned about what happens under the new policy when a Soldier finishes a tour with one unit and then is transferred to another unit that is getting ready to deploy.

The Soldiers had no problem serving alongside reserve-component Soldiers who will be mobilized and deployed for 12-months, Gainey said, because active-duty Soldiers understand the National Guard and

Army Reserve serve differently.

The Soldiers have more of a problem with why the different services have different deployment tempos, he said. “We need to do a better job of explaining why the services deploy the way they do.”

Gainey said all the Soldiers he met were motivated and ready to do their missions. The Soldiers at Callahan and Warhorse are extremely focused on their combat mission, he said. “You can see it in their eyes,” said Marine Gunnery Sgt. Stevie Soanes, who accompanied Gainey on his trip. “They are very intense.”

All the Soldiers were annoyed that their families found out about the new Army policy before they did. “The Soldiers told me their morale crashed when that happened,” Gainey said. “I hope whoever leaked that to the press is happy with himself.”

All the Soldiers still trust defense leaders, but they are watching, Gainey said.

“They are looking at the way we respond to the deployment cycle,” he said. “We cannot break this 15-12 contract. Military leaders would lose all credibility, and that would hurt the country.”

Warrior Transition Brigade: putting Soldiers first

By Kristin Ellis
Army News Service

A new brigade aimed at overseeing the health, welfare and morale of patients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center was activated in mid April.

The Warrior Transition Brigade, led primarily by combat veterans, will allow doctors and nurses to focus solely on medical care as brigade cadre meet Soldiers' other needs.

WTB Commander Col. Terrance McKenrick said the unit's mission is to facilitate warriors' transition and healing process, and explained that this is critical to Soldiers overseas, as well.

"The success of this mission is important to our deployed Soldiers. They need to focus on their difficult combat tasks knowing that, if injured, they will receive the best possible care," McKenrick said. "We also need to reassure the American people that the welfare of their serving sons, daughters, spouses and Family Members is our number one priority."

The brigade employs squad leaders, case managers and primary-care managers who will work together to ensure continuity of care and a seamless transition back into the Army or return to civilian life.

Capt. Steve Gventer, WTB's Able Company commander, said the brigade will eventually have 166 cadre, including 18 platoon sergeants and 54 staff sergeants across three companies – all dedicated to helping wounded Soldiers.

The brigade's current staff of 110 Soldiers and 28 new case managers reduces the case-manager-to-patient ratio from 1:50 to 1:17. There is also one staff sergeant for every 12 transitioning warriors who is dedicated to de-conflicting issues that may arise while Soldiers go through the healing process.

"Their sole focus is those 12 Soldiers, that's their mission," Gventer said. "We bring people who are focused on nothing more than taking care of these wounded

warriors; to get them through the system, not as expeditiously as possible, but in the best manner possible without unnecessary steps."

Most squad leaders are combat arms noncommissioned officers who've experience leading and caring for small units of Soldiers.

"Combat arms Soldiers, for the most part, have always worked in small elements that develop bonds and trust very quickly. The trust element is key in their operations; these Soldiers know if bad things happen they will be taken care

of – 'I will never leave a fallen comrade,'" said WTB's Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Hartless.

Maj. Christopher Ballard, WTB Bravo Company commander, agrees. "I think we do bring numbers to the fight and our experience with leading and taking care of Soldiers. "The focus is entirely different, but leading Soldiers is leading Soldiers."

Hartless, Ballard and Gventer

have all been through outpatient care at one point in their Army careers. For the command sergeant major, it was during a deployment to Afghanistan that he was severely injured and evacuated thru Germany to Walter Reed.

Walter Reed staff members have trained the WTB cadre, most of whom have no medical background, on resources available to injured Soldiers and their Families.

McKenrick explained that routine interactions with case managers, squad leaders, first sergeants, platoon sergeants and others in the chain of command will help resolve issues and measure the brigade's success. Regular surveys will be given to the Soldiers and their Families to determine the overall performance of the brigade.

The brigade will also implement a tracking system to monitor the progress of Soldiers transitioning through in- and out-processing, rehabilitation, treatment, evaluation boards and their transition back to their unit or civilian life, he said.

Senior leader calls for immediate fix to disability process

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England recently called for a new policy that moves wounded troops from Iraq and Afghanistan to the front of the line in the disability rating process while system-wide fixes to the disability and healthcare systems are put in place.

England recommended an immediate measure to speed combat-wounded troops through the DoD disability system and smooth their transition to the Department of Veterans Affairs system. The goal, he said, is "an uninterrupted, seamless continuum of care and support" that ensures nobody falls through the cracks or gets mired down in bureaucratic red tape.

Wounded troops represent about 11 percent of the 25,000 servicemembers in DoD's dis-

ability system. The problem, England said, is that this 11 percent is funneled through the system just as the other 89 percent.

This "one-size-fits-all rating process" bogs down the processing of combat-wounded troops cases, England said.

Instead, he recommended that DoD expedite its cases to smooth their transition into VA care. Many of the wounded troops' cases are relatively clear-cut and can be moved through the system quickly, he said.

England acknowledged that this immediate fix is just one step toward improving the way wounded troops are cared for and, when appropriate, processed through the disability system. He said he's looking forward to hearing what studies, reviews, commissions and panels have to say about the matter when they report their findings before the year's end.

"In my judgment, it is time to step back and take a holistic look at the system instead

of just applying fixes to the system," England said. "We need an integrated, systemic solution with the right mechanisms in place ... that makes sense from the Soldier's perspective."

England said it also may require looking to other national systems associated with disability determination and compensation: the Social Security Administration's disability payments, the Department of Labor's workmen's compensation program and the Department of Veterans Affairs and DoD disability systems, among them.

"They are all carried out in different ways, against different systems to achieve different ends," he said.

The differences between these complex programs can be confusing to benefit recipients, England said, suggesting the need for a new national approach for compensating disabled workers. "It may be time to cast a wider net and look at this whole area of disability."

